

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 IO-13 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04
H-01 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01
SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 OMB-01 ACDA-07 /093 W
-----023266 121801Z /45

R 112354Z JUL 77
FM AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6715
INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY MANAGUA
AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE
AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR
AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA
AMEMBASSY MEXICO
AMCONSUL BELIZE
USMISSION USUN NY
USCINCSO

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PBOR, UK, BH, GT
SUBJ: BELIZE

1. SUMMARY: GOG CONTINUES TO CATEGORIZE WASHINGTON TALKS AS SUCCESSFUL. PRESIDENT LAUGERUD TOLD PRESS THAT HE IS "PLEASED" AND "OPTIMISTIC." BOTH PRESIDENT AND FOREIGN MINISTER ARE PUBLICLY TRYING TO PORTRAY JOINT COMMUNIQUE AS BRITISH "AGREEMENT" NOT TO MAKE ANY UNILATERAL GRANT OF INDEPENDENCE TO BELIZE. MOLINA HAS DENIED THAT ROWLANDS VISIT TO GUATEMALA HAD ANY CONDITIONS ATTACHED. A TRIAL BALLOON RE POSSIBILITY OF COMPROMISE TERRITORIAL SETTLEMENT OF DISPUTE MAY BE AIRBORNE. MEANWHILE A HIGH-LEVEL DELEGATION REITERATED HONDURAN SUPPORT. END SUMMARY.

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2. PRESIDENT LAUGERUD TOLD DAILY PRENSA LIBRE JULY 8, "THE RESULT OF THE TALKS WITH THE BRITISH PLEASES ME BECAUSE THE COUNTRY WILL NOT HAVE TO BLEED MORE AFTER THE FEBRUARY 4 EARTHQUAKE. FORTUNATELY THE ENGLISH UNDERSTOOD THAT WE ARE AT THE POINT WHERE WE COULD NOT TAKE A SINGLE STEP BACK EVEN IF ALL GUATEMALANS HAD TO DIE. WITH THIS RESULT THE TALKS CAN BE RENEWED IN A MORE CONSTRUCTIVE

MANNER. MINISTER CALLAGHAN INDICATES TO ME IN HIS LETTER THAT THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT IS DISPOSED TO SETTLE THE DISPUTE IN PEACE AND WITH HONOR FOR BOTH GREAT BRITAIN AND GUATEMALA. HOWEVER, THE ARMY WILL REMAIN ALERT TO ASSURE ALL GUATEMALANS THE INTEGRITY OF THE NATIONAL TERRITORY AND THE SAFEGUARDING OF THE HONOR OF THE NATION."

3. ON HIS RETURN TO GUATEMALA JULY 9 FOREIGN MINISTER MOLINA ECHOED LAUGERUD'S OPTIMISM AND STRESSED THE RELAXATION OF TENSIONS. MOLINA DENIED THAT THE ALREADY ANNOUNCED VISIT OF BRITISH UNDER SECRETARY ROWLANDS WAS CONDITIONED ON A PRIOR WITHDRAWAL OF THE BRITISH REINFORCEMENTS. BUT ROWLANDS' "COURTESY" VISIT, BY FURTHER CONTRIBUTING TO A RELAXATION OF TENSIONS, COULD LEAD TO THAT RESULT, HE SAID.

4. MOLINA MENTIONED AS A SECOND POSITIVE RESULT OF THE TALKS BRITISH AGREEMENT NOT TO GRANT INDEPENDENCE UNILATERALLY TO BELIZE. PRESIDENT LAUGERUD IN INTERVIEW CITED ABOVE HAD ALSO SAID, "IN A LETTER I RECEIVED FROM PRIME MINISTER JAMES CALLAGHAN, HE ASSURES ME THAT THERE WILL BE NO UNILATERAL (GRANT OF) INDEPENDENCE FOR BELIZE."

5. COMMENT: GOG IS MAKING THE MOST OF BRITISH STATEMENT IN JULY 7 JOINT COMMUNIQUE ON SLOW AND OPEN NATURE OF LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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INDEPENDENCE PROCESS BY CONSTRUING IT AS BRITISH "COMMITMENT" NOT TO MAKE A UNILATERAL GRANT OF INDEPENDENCE. EDITORIAL IN OFFICIAL DAILY DIARIO DE CENTRO AMERICA JULY 8 REASONS, "GREAT BRITAIN HAS DECLARED THAT THE PROCESS CARRIED OUT IN OTHER SITUATIONS AND IN OTHER CASES RELATING TO CHANGES IN THE STATUS OF DEPENDENT TERRITORIES HAS HAD A SLOW DEVELOPMENT AS THIS PROCESS REQUIRES, AND THE STEPS HAVE BEEN PUBLIC, AND NOT SECRET, AND GREAT BRITAIN STATED YESTERDAY -- IN THE RELEVANT SECTION OF THE COMMUNIQUE -- THAT IN RESPECT TO BELIZE IT (THE INDEPENDENCE PROCESS) WILL NOT PROCEED IN A SUDDEN MANNER 'AND WITHOUT CONSULTATION (WITH THE GOG) BUT RATHER THAT THE INTEREST AND POSITIONS OF THE PARTIES WILL BE TAKEN INTO CONSIDERATION.' THAT IS TO SAY THAT ONE OF THE BASIC POINTS WHICH GUATEMALA HAS MAINTAINED, I.E., ACCEPTANCE AS A FUNDAMENTAL POINT THAT INDEPENDENCE SHALL NOT BE GRANTED UNILATERALLY TO BELIZE, HAS BEEN ACHIEVED. CONSEQUENTLY, GUATEMALA HAS WON ITS FIRST VICTORY ON THE SUBJECT OF "BELIZE."

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6. THE INTERIOR QUOTATION, ABOVE, WAS LIFTED FROM A SEPARATE PARAGRAPH OF THE COMMUNIQUE. THIS CONSTRUCTION MAKES IT APPEAR THAT THE BRITISH WOULD NOT GRANT INDEPENDENCE TO BELIZE WITHOUT PRIOR GUATEMALAN AGREEMENT, PRESUMABLY NOT AN ACCURATE RENDERING OF THE BRITISH POSITION. END COMMENT.

7. WIRE SERVICE STORIES OUT OF WASHINGTON THAT GOG IS PREPARED TO SEE BELIZE INDEPENDENT IN EXCHANGE FOR TERRITORIAL COMPENSATION HAVE MERITED HEADLINES IN MOST LOCAL PAPERS, ALTHOUGH EDITORIAL REACTION HAS BEEN THIN. MEDIA HAVE YET TO PURSUE UPI VERSION CARRIED IN EL IMPARCIAL JULY 9 WHICH REPORTS MOLINA'S ALLEGED ADMISSION THAT GUATEMALA'S PRICE FOR WITHDRAWING ITS CLAIM TO ALL OF BELIZE IS "A BAND OF TERRITORY KNOWN AS LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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TOLEDO IN SOUTHERN BELIZE WHICH EXTENDS FROM THE SARSTOON

RIVER TO THE MOHO RIVER, A LITTLE FURTHER TO THE NORTH AND NEAR THE TOWN OF PUNTA GORDA", WHICH WOULD CARRY WITH IT ENLARGED GUATEMALAN ACCESS TO THE CARRIBBEAN.

8. ON HIS ARRIVAL IN GUATEMALA JULY 8 MOLINA TOLD PRESS THAT HIS REMARKS IN WASHINGTON HAD BEEN "DISTORTED" WITHOUT, AS ONE PAPER NOTED, EITHER CONFIRMING OR DENYING THAT THE CESSION IDEA HAD BEEN ADVANCED.

9. COMMENT: SINCE THE GOG HAS NEVER OPENLY ADMITTED THAT IT IS NEGOTIATING FOR LESS THAN ALL OF BELIZE, MOLINA'S ALLEGED REMARKS MAY BE TRIAL BALLOON TO GAUGE GUATEMALAN REACTION TO IDEA OF COMPROMISE TERRITORIAL SETTLEMENT. GOG IS AS WELL AWARE THAT UNLESS THE EDUCATED PUBLIC, AND ESPECIALLY THE ARMY, IS PREPARED TO ACCEPT A COMPROMISE, ANY SETTLEMENT OF BELIZE DISPUTE WHICH GIVES GUATEMALA LESS THAN ALL, OR AT LEAST MOST, OF BELIZE WOULD BE SEVERELY CONDEMNED AND STABILITY OF GOVERNMENT COULD BE THREATENED. SO FAR THE ONLY PRESS COMMENT HAS BEEN EDITORIAL IN PRO-GOVERNMENT NACION RECOMMENDING REFERENDUM IN GUATEMALA TO DETERMINE WHAT GUATEMALAN PUBLIC WANTS TO NEGOTIATE. MOLINA PRESS CONFERENCE ANNOUNCED FOR JULY 11 SHOULD PROVIDE OPPORTUNITY FOR PRESS TO ZERO IN ON QUESTION. END COMMENT.

10. MEANWHILE, A HONDURAN DELEGATION, HEADED BY MINISTERS OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND DEFENSE, COLONEL ROBERTO PALMA GALVEZ AND GENERAL OMAR ANTONIO ZELAYA, RESPECTIVELY, PAID A ONE-DAY VISIT TO GUATEMALA JULY 9 TO DISCUSS BELIZE DISPUTE. THEY OFFERED HONDURAS' "FULL SUPPORT" BUT EXPRESSED HOPE THAT LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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DISPUTE WOULD BE SETTLED BY "DIPLOMATIC MEANS."
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Message Attributes

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Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
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Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
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Office: ACTION ARA
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
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Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
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Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
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Type: TE
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Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009